

Message Text

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22

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 OMB-01

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R 050319Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 858

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

UNCLAS WELLINGTON 0458

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, NZ

SUBJ: CANDIDATES CHOSEN FOR NELSON BY-ELECTION

1. NATIONAL AND LABOUR PARTIES HAVE CHOSEN CANDIDATES TO CONTEST FEBRUARY 28 NELSON BY-ELECTION, WHICH FOLLOWS DEATH OF NELSON MP (AND LABOUR'S SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE) SIR STANLEY WHITEHEAD.

2. NATIONAL PARTY HAS CHOSEN P.H. MALONE AS ITS CANDIDATE. MALONE, WHO CONTESTED THE ADJACENT TASMAN SEAT AGAINST THEN PRIME MINISTER ROWLING IN NOBEMBER, IS A SOLID CAMPAIGNER AND PERFORMED WELL AGAINST ROWLING. THE LABOUR CANDIDATE, M.F. COURTNEY, IS A WELL-KNOWN MEMBER OF THE NELSON CITY COUNCIL BUT IS UNTRIED IN PARLIAMENTARY CAMPAIGNING.

3. ALTHOUGH NELSON VOTERS ELECTED WHITEHEAD TO OFFICE SEVEN TIMES, IT IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED THIS WAS A RESULT OF HIS STRONG PERSONAL FOLLOWING RATHER THAN AN ELECTORATE COMMITMENT TO LABOUR. LAST ELECTION GAVE WHITEHEAD MAJORITY OF ONLY 1,100, AND MOST OBSERVERS NOW CLASSIFY NELSON AS MARGINAL SEAT. BY-ELECTION WILL THEREFORE PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY TO GAUGE NOT ONLY CANDIDATES BUT PUBLIC REACTION TO MULDOON GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS AND STATE-
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MENTS DURING FIRST TWO MONTHS IN OFFICE.

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